WESTMEATH
PROVINCIAL PARK

PRELIMINARY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Ontario

Ministry of
Natural
Resources

Vincent G. Kerrio
Minister

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June, 1989

APPROVAL STATEMENT

This Draft Preliminary Management Plan for Westmeath Provincial park has been prepared in accordance with the Ontario Provincial Parks Management Planning Reference. The plan attempts to balance the need to protect the significant natural features found on the site with the need to develop low intensity outdoor recreation opportunities in this near urban location.

We are pleased to submit this draft document for purposes of review.

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Pembroke District

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Westmeath Provincial park is one of few undeveloped areas remaining along the Ottawa River in Ontario. The Park boasts 1900 metres of sand beach in a sensitive dune environment. Situated on a large bend in the river, 16.5 kilometres from the City of Pembroke, it offers an excellent opportunity for a variety of low intensity outdoor recreational and educational activities (Figure 1).

The Province of Ontario acquired the Westmeath property for a Provincial Park in 1984 after several years of negotiations with the landowners. The westmeath property had been approved for the development of a large residential subdivision. However the involvement of groups such as the Pembroke Outdoor Sportsman's Club and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters resulted in the acquisition and protection of this unique property by the government.

The park consists of 610 hectares, 353 of which are dry land. The property was put into regulation as a Provincial park in May 1985 under Regulation No. 493/85 and has been managed on an interim basis since that time.

The proposed park is situated in the Ottawa-Bonnechere rift valley on bedrock which consists entirely of outlier Middle Ordovician limestones. This has been overlain by relatively deep post-glacial lacustrine sands, modern alluvial sands, silts, clays, and gravels, and recent organic deposits. The majority of the park area is composed of an active sand spit which, over thousands of years, has extended to enclose a large wetland known as Bellows Bay.

There are a number of significant earth and life science features which are intimately associated with this landscape (Figure 2). A total of fifteen distinct site types are represented ranging from very dry to very wet in normal and above normal microclimates. The dry beach community along the eastern shore of the spit supports a large aggregation of regionally uncommon species and one provincially rare species (see section 7.1 and 7.2 for more details) and the offshore marshes on the west side of Bellows Bay also have regionally unrepresented species (see section 7.1 and 7.2 for more details). The extreme eastern and western ends of the spit and the scarp also support extensive wet lowland forest communities dominated by silver maple and black ash, the former at the limit of its northern range.

The park also contains landforms such as a simple spit, relict beach ridges, cuspate foreland, relict

FIGURE 1 LOCATION OF WESTMEATH PROVINCIAL PARK

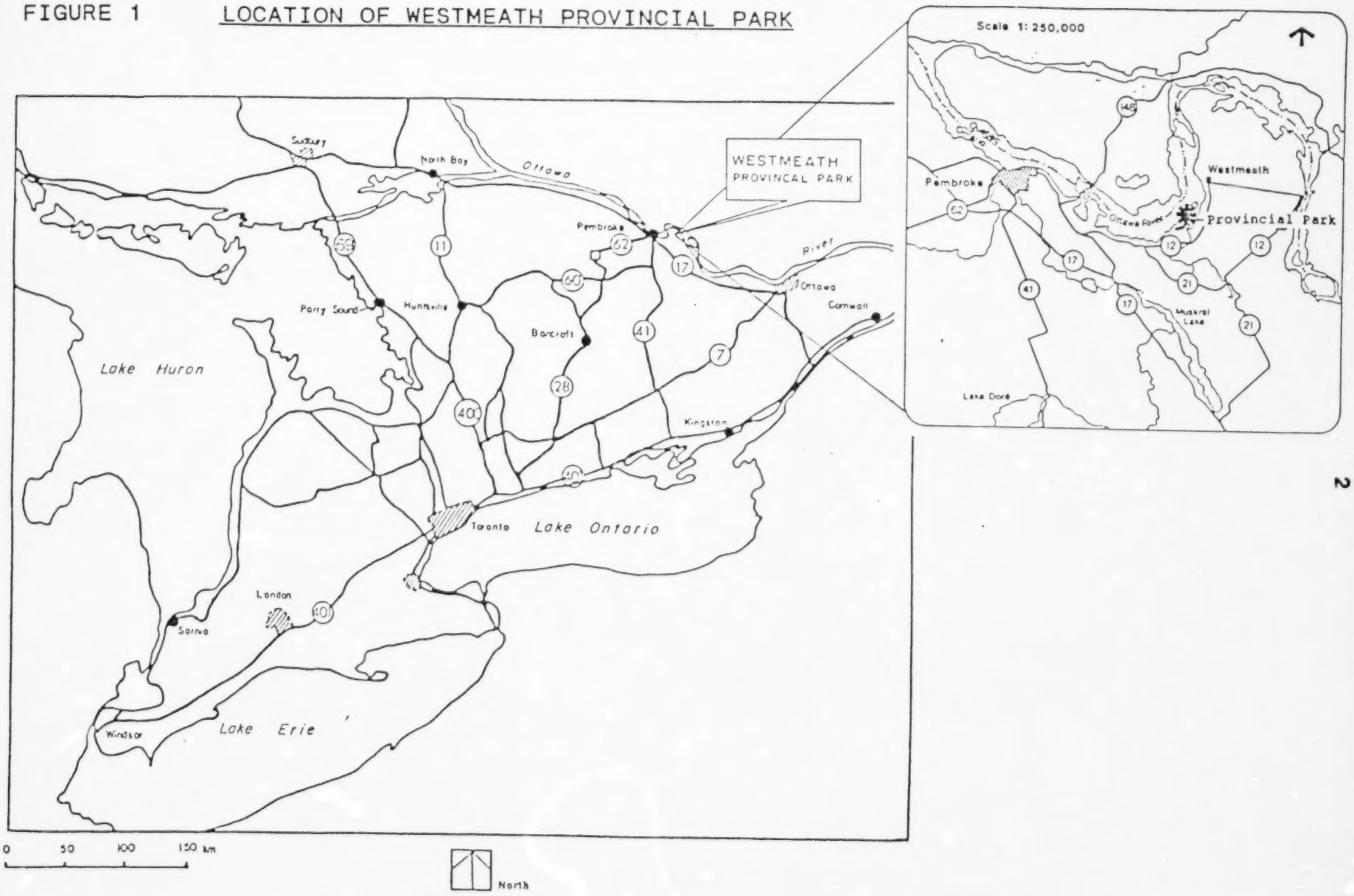


FIGURE 2 WESTMEATH PROVINCIAL PARK
SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

LEGEND:

	SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITIES	RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE
1	Dry beach communities	R* & P*
2	Wet beach and marsh communities	R & L*
3	Dry thicket	R & L
4	Trembling aspen-bur oak-silver maple stand	R & L
5	Silver maple forest	R & L
6	Sweet flag marsh	R & L
7	Bulrush marsh	R & L
8	Wild rice marsh	R & L
	SIGNIFICANT SPECIES	
a	Juglans cinerea (butternut)	R & L
b	Carpinus caroliniana (blue beech) + Xanthoxylum americanum (prickly ash)	R & L
c	Gaylussacia baccata (huckleberry)	R & L
d	Cornus amomum (silky dogwood)	R & L
e	Helenium autumnale (sneezeweed)	R & L
	SIGNIFICANT LANDFORMS	
A	Cuspate foreland	R & L
B	Sand Point	L
C	Relict Shoreline	R & L
D	Relict Ottawa Terrace	R & L

park boundary
conservation easement
12 County Road 12

* L - Local
R - Regional
P - Provincial

300 150 0 300
metres

Ottawa terrace, foredune, parallel dune, and bayou which are of regional significance and the latter five have no comparative examples in the region.

Due to the variety of terrestrial and aquatic habitats, the park area supports a relatively wide diversity of faunal populations. Upland forest communities, sand beaches, offshore sand-bars, and the extensive marsh complex in Bellows bay provide habitat for typical mammal, reptile, amphibian, and bird species of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region.

Resource analysis also indicates that Westmeath Provincial Park has good recreational potential as well as significant natural features. Westmeath park is essential to meet the district's targets to provide recreational opportunities such as bathing, picnicking, hiking and nature appreciation for local residents and visitors. Lack of public shoreline and limited access to the beaches and waters along the Ottawa River can be improved with the introduction of Westmeath provincial park as a day use facility.

These targets also recognize the importance of Pembroke District as a recreation and tourism area. The park will satisfy local recreation needs and service non-local residents who have travelled to some of the popular tourist destinations. Thus, the park will contribute to the local economy by providing recreation and employment opportunities.

The Westmeath Provincial Park Management Plan provides policies which will guide the careful development and management of the park for the next 20 years. It is important to ensure that natural and cultural features are not only protected but also made available for public appreciation and use. It is also vital to identify the level of supply of recreational opportunities which could be provided at the same time as achieving protection objectives and targets.

Background information about the park has been collected since 1979 and is summarized in the 1988 "Westmeath Provincial Park Management Plan - Background Information" document. This background information as well as four alternative concept plans for the park were presented to the public through a newsletter as well as a two day Open House at the Pembroke District Office and several meetings with interested individuals and groups. A summary of the public comments is contained in Section 16.0 of the Management Plan.

2.0 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Westmeath Park possesses several areas of earth and life science significance as well as accessible recreational resources. The major challenge of the Management Plan is to strike a balance between the need to protect these significant features and the demand for public recreation opportunities on the Ottawa River.

The following issues were identified during the Management Planning study and as a result of public consultation.

2.1 Classification

Strong support was shown for both the nature reserve and natural environment classification. Preliminary life science inventories and analyses had identified significant features which should be protected and preserved through a nature reserve classification. Various individuals and organizations supported this classification and still others opposed any access to the park for other than educational or scientific reasons.

In contrast, the limited public access to the Ottawa River and lack of public shoreline in the vicinity for recreation purposes was a key issue for many local communities and organizations (see section 16). Accessible day use facilities would also augment the existing local tourism attractions.

As a result of public consultation the preferred option appeared to be a combination of a Nature Reserve and Natural Environment park. It would consist predominately of nature reserve zones to protect the significant earth and life science features but also provide for limited recreational opportunities (refer to section 7.0). Management techniques such as expanded nature reserve zones, day use only, staff interpretation, education and monitoring as well as controlled access (see section 14.0 for more details) will be implemented to control recreational use in this sensitive environment.

2.2 Car Camping

Although initially considered as a good location for overnight camping, public concern was raised over the impact of extended use on the park's significant resources and the local tourism industry. The natural environment classification addresses this issue by eliminating overnight camping provisions.

2.3 Waterfowl Hunting

Traditionally Bellows Bay has been a favourite spot for waterfowl hunting as the wetland is an important waterfowl nesting, resting and staging area. Support was indicated for the

continuation of waterfowl hunting within the park setting and for habitat improvement. Thus, a Waterfowl Management Plan will be prepared to provide management guidelines as well as controlls and regulations for waterfowl hunting in a designated area (see section 8.4 for more details).

2.4 Significant Features

Several areas located along the Ottawa River shoreline of the park have been identified as earth and life science significant features, the Cuspate Foreland, Bellows Bay, and Sand Point (Figure 2). These areas contain vegetation sensitive to disturbance and which are most susceptible to visitation impact due to their proximity to visitor traffic. This issue will be dealt with through the landform/vegetation management plan (section 8.1 and 8.2 respectively) which describes such management techniques as park capacity standards, design of facilities, restrictive devices, site monitoring and educational programs for park visitors and staff.

2.5 Vegetation Management

Certain forested areas within the park will require management to maintain aesthetics and for reasons of safety. Emphasis will be placed on the tree plantation areas (planted in the early 60's) located within the park as addressed in a vegetation management plan (section 8.2). Poison ivy is prevalent throughout the park and must be identified to visitors or controlled where necessary to ensure visitor safety. The presence of poison ivy in areas frequented by visitors of the park will also be dealt with in the vegetation management plan (section 8.2).

3.0 CLASSIFICATION

Westmeath Provincial Park is classified as a Natural Environment park under the Provincial Park Classification System. Natural Environment Parks incorporate outstanding recreational landscapes with representative natural features to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences.

The Pembroke District Land Use Guidelines approved in 1983 after extensive public consultation identify Westmeath as a Natural Environment Class Candidate park. Initially, the property was to be acquired for recreation purposes but the identification of several significant features in later studies indicated that a more protective mandate was required. The Natural Environment class of park would realize the recreation potential of the property while reducing the possibility of negatively impacting on those significant resources. The inability of Westmeath park to meet size requirements of a Natural Environment Park

classification was seen to be of minor importance considering its contribution to the park system targets and the limited land availability in Southern Ontario.

Westmeath has been classed as a Natural Environment Park in recognition of the tremendous potential it offers as a year round recreational environment for low intensity use activities such as bathing, hiking, picnicking and cross country skiing as well as its traditional use for waterfowl hunting. The park's location near several urban centres adds to its recreational importance.

Westmeath also contains numerous natural features, representative of this section of the Province (Site District 12). Vegetation regions, site regions and site districts provide a spatial framework of plant communities of progressively finer resolution to guide the selection of areas for conservation. The objective is to select areas inclusive of these larger natural regions based on the vegetative cover types and site conditions to which they have been classified.

The park offers substantial opportunities for outdoor education and research in light of its proximity to major educational centres and its unique plant and animal communities and earth science features. The park is also of historical interest as it is believed that Sand Point was used by aboriginals and perhaps by voyageurs.

Natural Environment class is the most appropriate class given the need to balance the protection and recreational use of the site. Westmeath Provincial Park will provide an unique opportunity to protect an important part of the natural heritage of the province as well as an opportunity to provide quality recreational opportunities to the people of the upper Ottawa Valley and visitors to the area. The park's proximity to tourism destination points will encourage day use visitation as well as provide economic benefits to the local community. Controlled access, interpretation programs and monitoring by park staff will also serve to protect the natural features while enabling public appreciation of the park.

4.0 PARK GOAL

The goal of Westmeath Provincial Park is to protect and preserve an area of earth and life science significance while providing opportunities to enjoy a variety of quality passive outdoor recreational and educational experiences in a near urban setting.

5.0 OBJECTIVES

Natural Environment Parks

contribute to the achievement of all four Ontario Provincial Park objectives: protection, recreation, tourism and heritage appreciation.

5.1 PROTECTION

> To protect significant elements of the natural and cultural landscape of Westmeath Provincial Park.

The protection of the sensitive features of Westmeath Provincial Park is the foremost objective of the Management Plan. The designation of Westmeath as a Provincial Park protects an area of unique earth and life science significance which is representative of this section of eastern Ontario. The protection of these features is important to the fulfilment of other park objectives including nature interpretation and education.

5.2 HERITAGE APPRECIATION

> To provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the outdoor natural and cultural heritage of Westmeath Provincial Park.

The interpretive program will encourage a greater appreciation of the Ottawa River and its associated features as well as promote protection of these resources. An emphasis will be placed on guided and self guided interpretive programs to provide visitors with the opportunity to fully realize the heritage value of this section of the Ottawa River (refer to section 11 for more details).

A preliminary examination was carried out to determine the historic and archaeological resources in Westmeath Provincial Park. Sand Point and the Development Zone were examined for potential historic remains from European explorers or aboriginals. The presence of flint, bone and charcoal fragments east of Sand Point indicated aboriginal use of the area. However, no evidence was found to substantiate the use of the point by explorers. It was suggested that the voyageurs or explorers most likely followed the shorter distance along the opposite shoreline of the river (for further details see section 8.5).

5.3 RECREATION

> To provide low intensity recreation opportunities in a day use setting for upper Ottawa Valley residents and visitors.

Westmeath provincial park will provide much needed opportunities for several low intensity outdoor activities. Local residents may participate in bathing (54,000 opportunities), picnicking (11,000 opportunities), hiking and nature appreciation in the

park. However, the camping recreation target (16,000 opportunities) predicted for Westmeath Provincial Park (in the District Land Use Guidelines) will not be met due to the restrictive measures imposed for protection of the significant features of the park. Westmeath also has the potential to accommodate controlled waterfowl hunting opportunities during the fall. The restricted access and controlled visitor use will ensure the protection objective is not compromised.

5.4 TOURISM

> To provide Ontario's residents and out-of-province visitors with opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive features of Westmeath Provincial Park.

Westmeath Park will provide much needed low intensity opportunities for residents of Pembroke District while enhancing the attraction of the area to travellers from elsewhere in the province.

The operation of the park will be complementary to the tourism strategy for Renfrew County particularly adding to the variety of existing attractions in Pembroke District such as the white water rafting industry and area campgrounds.

6.0 PARK BOUNDARY

Westmeath Park encompasses 610 hectares, 353 of which are dry land (Figure 3).

It has been determined that a 300 foot conservation easement (consisting of 104 hectares) should be obtained along the entire southern shore of Bellows Bay for park management, wildlife management and access control purposes. No development has taken place within this area and no recreational activities are anticipated. However the area has traditionally been used as an access route into Bellows Bay during the fall hunting season. It is imperative that this 300 foot wide tract of land be put under regulation as a Provincial park for waterfowl management and safety purposes to the benefit of both the park and private landowners. The easement will also serve to protect the private property rights of landowners and reduce the probability of trespassing occurring. The Ministry has entered into preliminary discussions with the owners of Lots 1 to 6 and 25 to 29 of North Front "A" Westmeath Township in order to negotiate the acquisition of this easement prior to the park's operation. During public participation a concern was expressed over the boundary location in lots 4, 5 and 6 North Front "A". This matter will be settled by a survey of the south shore of Bellows Bay to be undertaken

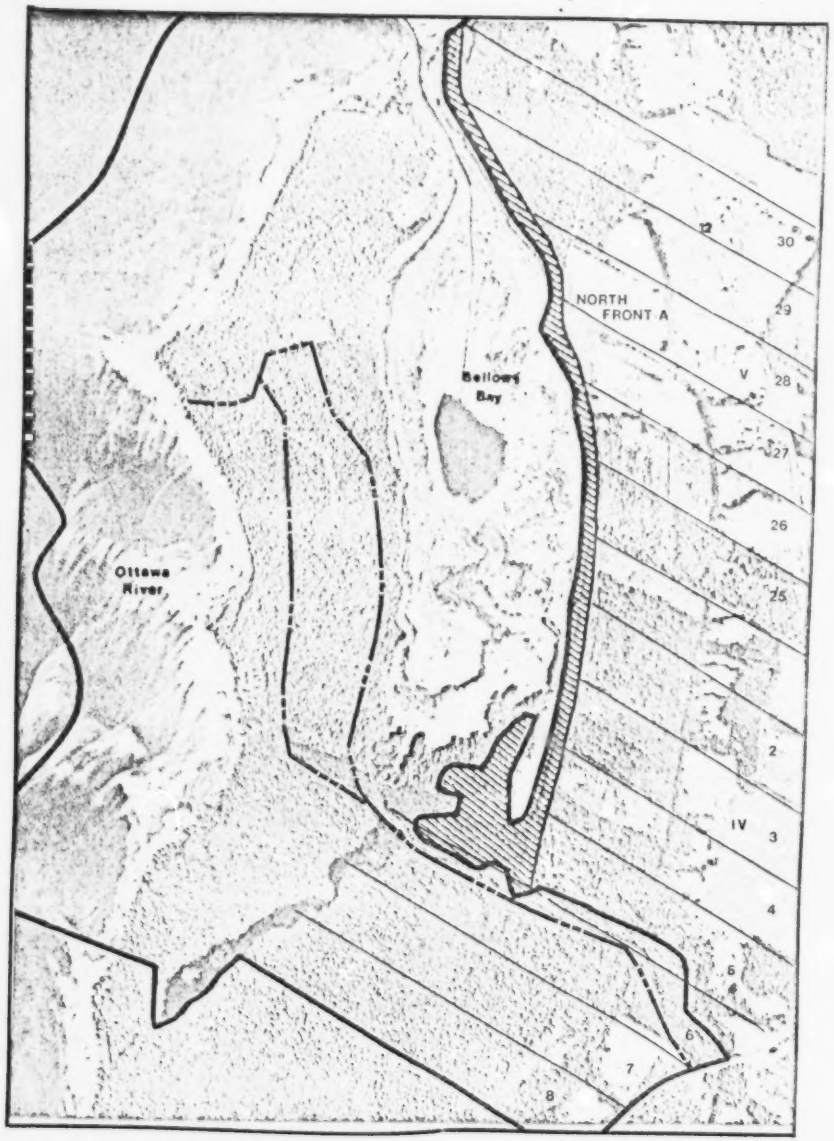


FIGURE 3 WESTMEATH PROVINCIAL PARK BOUNDARY AND CONSERVATION EASEMENT

LEGEND:

- Quebec/Ontario provincial border
- park boundary
- existing access roads
- conservation easement
- 12 County road 12

100 150 0 300
metres

by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

7.0 PARK ZONING

Park zoning allocates a park's land on the basis of its significance for protection and its potential for recreation within the context of the park's classification. The majority of Westmeath provincial park's land base or 47% of it is zoned nature reserve while the remainder is comprised of (39%) natural environment, (8%) development and (6%) access zones (Figure 4). The portion of the Ottawa River which is included within the park's boundary (approximately 257 hectares) is classified as Natural Environment except for approximately four hectares of development zone-1.

The park's significant earth and life science features, which require protection and management distinct from that in adjacent zones, are included in the Nature Reserve Zones.

The Natural Environment Zones encompass most of the remaining landscape in which a minimum of development is required to support low intensity uses such as hiking, bird watching, photography, etc. Waterfowl hunting will be permitted during the fall within a specially designated Natural Environment Zone. This will control and regulate activity in that prescribed and preferred area (refer to section 8.4 for additional information).

Facilities and services which provide for low intensity day use activities are provided in the Development Zone. At Westmeath the provision of these facilities and services will be closely linked to the carrying capacity of the site and the possible impact on surrounding zones. Park administrative control facilities and a small group camping area will also be provided in a Development Zone near the entrance to the park (Figure 4).

The transportation and utility corridor into the park will be contained within the Access Zone.

Major resources, recreational uses and permitted development are listed by zone type. A list of permitted uses in each zone is included in the document titled "Ontario Provincial Park Planning and Management Policies". All uses and facilities within the various zones will be subject to the Resource Management policies which are outlined in Section 8.0 of this Management Plan.

7.1 Nature Reserve Zones

The park includes three Nature Reserve Zones encompassing areas of earth and life science significance including Sand Point, the cuspate foreland

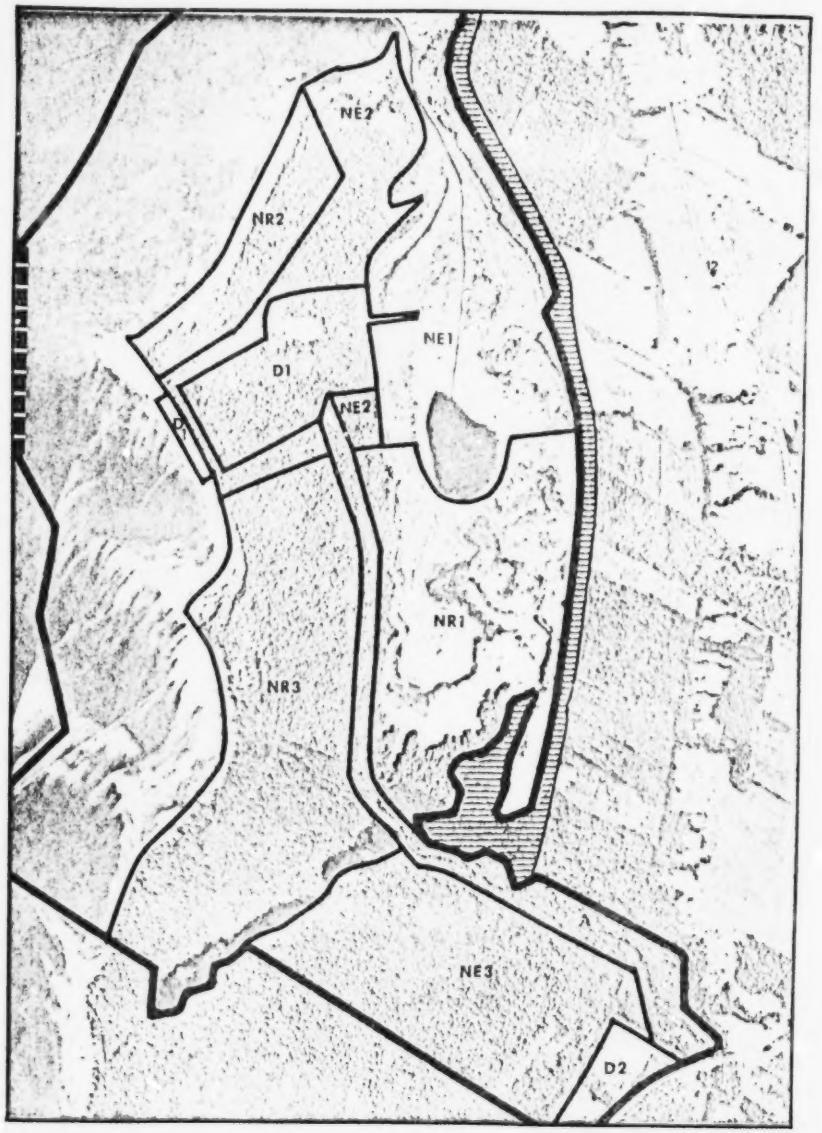


FIGURE 4 WESTMEATH PROVINCIAL PARK ZONING

LEGEND:

NR Nature Reserve Zone
NE Natural Environment Zone
D Development Zone
A Access Zone

park boundary
12 county road 12
Quebec/Ontario provincial border

and the western end of Bellows Bay (Figure 4).

These zones were designed to include, as much as possible those significant features identified in preliminary inventories. Almost 50% of Westmeath Provincial Park has been classified as Nature Reserve zones to protect its significant features. In addition, the inclusion of large buffer areas surrounding the sensitive features have been incorporated into the zones to provide for additional protection.

Development in the Nature Reserve Zones will be strictly limited to designated interpretive hiking trails and signs necessary for trail identification and the interpretation of significant features. A trail and boardwalk system will enable visitors to view the significant features from an appropriate distance yet also function to control pedestrian traffic through the sensitive area.

NR 1 (55 ha) Bellows Bay Nature Reserve

Bellows Bay and offshore zones of the spit are characterized by extensive wet meadows and marsh communities. Regionally uncommon species include Spartina pectinata (cordgrass) and Scirpus americana (bulrush) along the offshore marshes on the westside. Communities of Zizania palustris (wild rice), Scirpus fluviatilus (bulrush), and Acorus calamus (sweet flag) also constitute a large proportion of the wetland complex in Bellows Bay. As well the southern end of Bellows Bay is dominated by a forest complex consisting of predominately silver maple, with green ash, black ash and bur oak. Trees such as Acer saccharinum (silver maple) and Carpinus caroliniana (blue beech) as well as a southern shrub species such as Xanothoxylum americanum (prickly ash) are at the northern limits of their distribution.

The extensive marsh complex in Bellows Bay has been identified as an important staging and resting area for waterfowl species including mallard, black duck, wood duck, blue-winged and green-winged teal, goldeneye and lesser scaup. Bellows Bay is also an ideal breeding habitat for a variety of amphibians and reptiles, the more significant sightings of the provincially rare soft-shelled turtles and the regionally uncommon map turtle.

The development of observation platforms will be permitted within this zone.

NR 2 (24 ha) Sand Point Nature Reserve

The Sand Point Nature Reserve encloses the sand point on the extreme northwestern end of the

peninsula and extends in a easterly direction towards Bellows Bay channel (Figure 4). Sand Point is significant for the variety of unusual plant species which it supports, (i.e cocklebur, golden hyssop and silverweed). The tip of Sand point is distinguished from the rest of the park by the presence of cobbles and large boulders of limestone and dolomite. Just east of this point, archaeological evidence was found which indicates the area was used by aboriginals (section 8.5). Further east a relict beach ridge, reminiscent of higher water levels on the ancestral Ottawa River, is also evident. This area of the zone also incorporates regionally significant species such as Juglans cinerea (butternut), Acer saccharinum (silver maple) and a dry thicket community of Cyperus filiculmis, Helianthemum bicknellii, Polygonella articulatus, and Sporobolus cryptandrus.

NR 3 (81 ha) Cuspate Foreland Nature Reserve

The cuspate foreland represents an active system consisting of an assemblage of significant landforms: cuspate spit, beach ridges, foredunes, parallel dunes and several former lagoons. This array of features provide an excellent example of successional sequence and a habitat for a variety of unusual plant species. The dry beach community along the eastern shore of the spit supports a large aggregation of regionally uncommon species such as Artemisia campestris (sagewort wormwood), Elymus canadensis (Canada wild-rye), Polygonella articulata (jointwood), Hudsonia tomentosa (hudsonia), Cyperus filiculmis (umbrella sedge), Andropogon scoparius (little bluestem), and Helianthemum bicknellii (frostweed), and the provincially rare Bulbostylis capillaris (bulbostylis). Interesting lowland thickets of Spiraea latifolia (meadow sweet), Ilex verticillata (black alder), and Vaccinium macrocarpon, (cranberry) also occur in the vicinity of the cuspate foreland.

The continuous sand beach and offshore sand-bars are also excellent for shorebirds, such as killdeer, sanderling, herring gulls, and common terns.

The cuspate foreland is very sensitive to disturbance and must be protected from human impact. Interpretive trails will not be permitted in this sensitive area but instead, travel around it.

7.2 Natural Environment Zones

Natural Environment Zones include sections of the park in which minimum development is required to support low intensity hiking and viewing and to protect associated aesthetic landscapes.

Development will be limited to hiking and cross-country ski trails, signs necessary for trail identification and minimal interpretive facilities. There will be three Natural Environment Zones in the park.

NE 1 (51 ha)

This zone covers the northern half of Bellows Bay. The natural environment designation of this area provides a protective function in all aspects that the nature reserve immediately south of it provides, yet allows for the traditional waterfowl hunting in the fall. Seasonal waterfowl hunting is permitted in this zone in accordance with strict safety regulations and an approved Waterfowl Management Plan. This Waterfowl Management Plan (section 8.4) will deal with such matters as blind number and location, administration and the control of hunter numbers. Development within this zone will be limited to waterfowl observation platforms while access is available from the boat launching system in the adjacent development zone.

NE 2 (26 ha)

This zone covers approximately half of the northern end of the Westmeath Peninsula, surrounding the development areas and creating buffers for the nature reserve zones. This zone also extends between the beach and parking areas to encompass the sensitive dune system which exists there. The sensitivity of the sand dune system between the development zones warrants specific management and design considerations which will be discussed in section 8.1 and 14. Other significant features include portions of a silver maple stand, butternut grove, and wet and dry beach system (Figure 3 and 4).

NE 3 (56 ha)

This zone encompasses a wooded area of land near the entrance to the park and includes the relict shore bluff of the old Ottawa River shoreline.

7.3 Development Zone

D 1 (23 ha)

The Development-one zone is located near the eastern end of the property and encompasses the existing unoccupied cottage and garage. This zone will be designed to accommodate low intensity day use activities including swimming, hiking, picnicking and cross-country skiing. Parking for 100 vehicles will be provided well back (at least 75 metres) from the shoreline of the Ottawa River. The most appropriate location will be chosen based on the greatest degree of visitor control and least impact on the landscape. A looped road system will access the

parking areas. Toilet and change house facilities and a park office/visitor centre will be provided in this zone along the two paths that lead to the beach. Two boardwalks will cross the main sand dune to access the beach. A dock will be installed on the western shore of Bellows Bay portion of this zone to promote wildlife observation and boat access (see section 14 and accompanying figure for more details).

D 2 (6 ha)

Development Zone 2 is situated adjacent to the Access Zone near the entrance to the park. A control office will be located here to monitor and direct traffic entering the park and a maintenance compound will be constructed out of view of park visitors. This zone will also contain the group camping area as well as parking facilities for the group campers and winter visitors.

7.4 Access Zone

A (21 ha)

The road accessing the park follows existing bush roads on the property to Development zone 1. The access road initially designated in the concept plans was replaced by the current one due to the former's proximity to a sensitive feature, the cuspate foreland.

Hydro and telephone utilities will be accommodated within the Access Zone. To improve aesthetics and for convenience, underground utilities will be installed during road construction.

8.0 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Management of the resources within Westmeath Provincial Park will be carried out in accordance with the Park Management Plan. A Park Operating Plan will be developed which will outline specific operational guidelines for the management of the Park's land, water and special natural and cultural features.

8.1 Landform Management

Westmeath possesses several significant earth science features, two of which are in proximity to visitor traffic and will deserve careful management as outlined in a Landform Management Plan. One of the most prominent and sensitive features of Westmeath park are the sand dunes. The primary dune located along the shore of the Ottawa River is susceptible to erosion through trampling. For this reason, pedestrian traffic over the dunes must be restricted to two or three locations where boardwalks will access the beach. Other park facilities such as change houses and vault privies will be connected to the boardwalk

system as referred to in section 14.1 and accompanying figure. The sand dunes will also be protected through visitor education (visitor centre information and displays, park brochures, interpretive hikes, etc.) as well as site monitoring by park staff. Signs posted at the boundaries of the Nature Reserve Zones will also discourage entry into the zones and if necessary restrictive devices (eg. fences) will be installed if signs or warnings are not effective.

The cuspate foreland area of the beach is very unique as it represents the convergence of two sand spits and provides a representative example of the evolution of a sand bar. This feature is protected by a Nature Reserve Zone. Access to this landform from the beach will be deterred by visitor education and information, site monitoring, posted signs and restrictive devices if required. The Nature Reserve Zone also incorporates a buffer zone within its area and in addition a Natural Environment zone adjacent to it forms a buffer between zones. Pedestrian traffic through this area will be strictly confined to a trail and boardwalk system which will enable visitors to view the cuspate foreland from an appropriate distance without causing any damage to it.

8.2 Vegetation Management

A Vegetation Management Plan will be prepared for the park. Commercial forestry operations will not be permitted within the park. Tree plantation areas in the park will be treated only for management purposes by Ministry staff. This may entail periodic thinnings to encourage increased stand growth and vigour. In addition removal of dead or diseased trees may be required for safety purposes. Trees cut for development or management purposes will have their products retained for various uses in the Provincial Parks system. Non-native plant species will not be introduced in the park.

Poison ivy is prevalent throughout the park but will be controlled only if warranted. Areas within the Development and Access Zones and along hiking trails which have extensive patches likely to cause harm or which are unavoidable will be removed. Signs and public information will warn visitors of poison ivy off hiking trails and roadways. It is anticipated that the signs posted to warn of poison ivy will act as a management tool to deter visitors from wandering into areas of the park which are being protected from visitor impact (i.e. Nature Reserve Zones).

Insects and diseases threatening park values will

be controlled where feasible and desirable. Where insect control is required, it will be directed as narrowly as possible to the specific insect or disease so as to have minimal effects on other parts of the environment. Biological control will be used wherever feasible.

Within Bellows Bay, commercial harvesting of wild rice shall not be permitted. No management procedures will be implemented in Bellows Bay. Both the Nature Reserve and Natural Environment zone will be left in their existing state and allowed to evolve naturally.

Aquatic vegetation along the shore of the Ottawa river will be left in its natural state except for a small swimming area in the Development Zone. Visitor activity in that area should impede vegetative growth but it may be necessary to mechanically remove undesirable growth. The Ministry will suppress any wildfires which develop in the park. Decisions on appropriate fire suppression tactics will be made by the designated fire staff, however, no chemical will be used in fire suppression.

8.3 Fisheries Management

Existing sport fishing opportunities within the Natural Environment Zone of Bellows Bay and on the Ottawa River will be permitted to continue.

The spawning and nursery areas which naturally exist in Bellows Bay will be primarily protected through the Nature Reserve zoning.

8.4 Wildlife Management

Westmeath park possesses one of the most productive wetlands in Renfrew County. Bellows Bay is considered a Class 2 Provincial Wetland and provides a breeding, feeding and staging area for a variety of waterfowl. A waterfowl management plan will be developed for Bellows Bay. This will outline management guidelines for waterfowl and identify permitted uses, and controls and regulations for hunting.

Waterfowl productivity may be enhanced through monitoring and provision of waterfowl nesting structures. Provision of suitable nesting structures could also enhance the existing population and perhaps attract new species of birds and waterfowl. Several waterfowl observation areas including a viewing platform will be developed around Bellows Bay to enhance waterfowl and wildlife viewing opportunities in the spring and summer season.

Waterfowl hunting will continue to be permitted during the fall hunting season within the Natural Environment-one Zone and in accordance with an approved waterfowl management plan. Hunting will be strictly

controlled in terms of access, numbers of hunters, blind locations, etc. The length of the hunting season as well as hunting days may be restricted by the Ministry should conditions warrant. Such controls will not only serve to provide greater safety but will create improved hunting opportunities. The safety of all park visitors is of utmost concern. During the fall, the boundaries of the hunting (NE-1) zone will be well defined and the area will be regularly patrolled by Ministry staff. Details of the operation of the waterfowl hunt will be outlined in the waterfowl management plan. Hunting should not diminish the protective function of the adjacent nature reserve zone because of the removed location of preferred resting areas in the nature reserve zone, hunter controls and regulations, and the controlled duration of the hunt season.

Hunting of any species other than waterfowl will not be permitted within Westmeath Provincial Park.

Commercial trapping will not be permitted in the park. Animal populations may be controlled when necessary, to protect human health, and the safety or health of plant and animal species both inside and outside the park. Elimination of beaver nuisance may be required to ensure fisheries and wildlife management are not impeded. Where control is required, techniques will be used which have a minimal effect on the park's environment. Any special population control measures will be carried out under the strict supervision of or directly by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

8.5 Cultural Resource Management

An archaeological overview of the Westmeath Park property carried out several years ago indicated that Sand Point may have been used as a campsite during the era when the Ottawa River was a major transportation route for explorers, fur traders and lumbermen. A preliminary archaeological examination of the property has been completed. This assessment focused on the Sand Point area and the Development Zone-1. Archaeological evidence (flint, bone and charcoal fragments) retrieved east of Sand Point supported the notion that natives may have frequently visited the site yet there was no confirmation of a potential settlement site. There was no evidence to indicate that either area supported a possible camping site for voyageurs or explorers along this transportation route. It can be considered more probable that they followed the opposite shoreline for expediency reasons and thus used the more obtrusive points across the river. While further investigations will be conducted, this

brief survey confirmed that any development which will occur in the development zone will not conflict with any potential archaeological finds.

9.0 RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Recreation management in Westmeath Provincial Park will promote low intensity day-use opportunities while ensuring the protection of its natural features.

The majority of visitors will be concentrated within the beach and backshore picnicking area. No car campgrounds will be developed in the park. The two parking areas will limit the number of visitors to the park at any one time. Visitor use is anticipated to be highest on weekends during the summer. A full staff complement will be provided during summer weekends for access control and interpretive programs. Frequent staff patrols are required to ensure that park rules are being followed.

A sign plan will be developed for the park to direct people and provide specific information on the park's resources and facilities. Garbage collection will be provided at various locations on the beach and in the backshore areas. Changehouses and washrooms facilities will be provided for park visitors, and will be interconnected to the boardwalk system (see section 14.1).

Concession stands will not be allowed within the park in order to preserve the natural atmosphere. Boat launching facilities will not be provided on the Ottawa River. However a launching system for small boats will be available on the north shore of Bellows Bay in the Development-one Zone. This will enable pedestrian observation from its length as well as access to the water by boaters. Conflicts between wildlife viewers and hunters will be avoided through the segregated location and time period of each activity, staff monitoring, and enforced hunting rules and regulations.

Motorized vehicles such as trail bikes, snowmobiles or ATV's will be prohibited within the park other than for management purposes by park personnel. Horseback riding will also not be allowed.

Group camping (boy scouts, girl guides, nature clubs) will be provided for in the Access Zone near the park entrance. Party size will be determined according to the carrying capacity of the designated site. Groups wishing to camp must receive pre-authorization from the Park Superintendent.

Cross-country skiing may be promoted in the park during the winter. Access to the trails will be gained at the entrance to the park at County Road No. 12. Trail guides will be provided.

Although the park will not be staffed, Ministry personnel will groom the trails and patrol the park on a regular basis.

10.0 OPERATIONS POLICIES

A Park Operating Plan will be prepared to provide park staff with the necessary information required to operate the park on a day to day basis. The operations strategy will include such topics as budget, staffing, maintenance schedules, enforcement and emergency services. The provisions of the strategy will be consistent with the approved Ontario Provincial Parks Operating Standards, and will be reviewed annually and updated as required.

11.0 VISITOR SERVICES

Westmeath Provincial Park has the potential for recreational opportunities as well as enjoyment and appreciation of its natural features. Information describing these features and interpretation of their significance and ecological relationships is an important aspect of visitor appreciation and education. Information will be directed towards the protection of this unique natural environment, representative of this region.

Westmeath Provincial Park will offer a year round visitor services program. During the summer this program will focus on interaction between park visitors and staff. During the remainder of the year most information on the park will be provided in the form of published maps and brochures.

It is anticipated that most visitors to the park will consist of individuals, small groups and families from the City of Pembroke, Town of Renfrew and surrounding area who wish to spend part of their day near the Ottawa River. Currently there is very little public access to the river east of the Village of Petawawa. Visitation may also be expected from visitors to the area. In addition, the two Renfrew County school boards may use the park for outdoor education programs.

Park facilities will be designed to accommodate, as much as possible, visitors of all ages and those who are physically challenged. Boardwalks and the relatively flat terrain will make the beach area and hiking trails easily accessible. It is anticipated that the park will receive the greatest use on weekends during the months of June, July and August, however, the park will be accessible throughout most of the year for activities such as hiking and cross-country skiing.

A park office/visitor centre will be provided in the existing cottage on the property. An access control building will be constructed

near the entrance to the park. The Visitor Services Program will consist of three components; Information, Interpretation and Recreation described as follows:

11.1 Information

Information provided to the visitors will describe the natural and historical features of the park in terms of their regional significance and educational, scientific, and research values. Protection of this unique natural environment will also be emphasized in all forms of communication.

Information will be provided to the public using print, displays, audio-visual media, and staff interpretation. Park brochures, leaflets, trail guides, newsletters, and specific information on the Nature Reserves features of the park will be prepared as part of the information program. These will be available in the Visitor Centre/park office along with the audio-visual media and displays.

Permanent site displays or signs may also be used to educate visitors at the location of significant features (i.e. trails). For example, a display could be positioned on the boardwalk to inform visitors about the dune system over which they cross as well as the purpose behind constructing it. Personal contact between visitors and park staff will be promoted through the development and implementation of guided interpretive hikes and through enforcement of park regulations.

11.2 Interpretation

In conjunction with available information, an interpretive program will enhance the protection and heritage appreciation mandate of the park. The park's location, as well as the presence of several regionally and provincially significant features result in the park's excellent potential as an educational and interpretive area and for scientific research. The cuspate foreland provides an excellent example of the sequential development of the Westmeath sand spit. Sand spit interpretation can also depict evolution of the landform, describing its initial creation and enclosure of Bellows Bay to its still active processes.

In addition, the variety of wildlife and flora in the park as well as its unique earth science formation provide several areas which will form part of the interpretive program for park visitors. The interpretation of the earth and life science features will form one of the most important aspects of the parks operation. Their evolution, present status, and characteristic features will be discussed in the Visitor Services

interpretive program. Both guided and self-guided interpretive hikes will be offered in the park as well as passive recreational activities. In addition, the park could also be of educational value to school groups for day excursions. Interpretation of the various earth and life science features represented in Westmeath Provincial Park could be incorporated into their respective curriculum subjects.

11.3 Recreation

As a Natural Environment Day Use Park, the emphasis of visitor services will be on interpretation and information about the park's natural features. However, some special programs will be directed at recreation skill training, such as photography and bird watching. These will be related to the park's main characteristics and consistent with the objectives of the park.

12.0 RESEARCH

Scientific research by qualified individuals which contributes to the knowledge of the natural and cultural history and to environmental and recreational management will be encouraged.

A preliminary archaeological investigation of the Development Zone indicated that there were no artifacts located in that area. Further archaeological surveys in the park may provide evidence of native or voyageur occupation which could form part of the park's interpretive program.

Other areas of possible interest for research purposes include: Earth science (dry beach dune formation), significant plant communities, waterfowl habitat and fisheries.

All research programs will require the approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources District Office and must also meet all requirements under applicable provincial and federal legislation. The Ministry must approve the removal of faunal and floral specimens, soil and geological samples, and archaeological and historical artifacts by qualified researchers. All such materials removed remain the property of the Ministry.

Approved research activities and facilities will be compatible with protection objectives and recreational uses in the park, and will be subject to development and management policies for Natural Environment Parks unless special permission is given. Sites altered by research activities will be rehabilitated as closely to their previous condition as possible.

13.0 MARKETING

A marketing plan to attract visitors to Westmeath

Provincial Park will be prepared. Such a plan will have the following objectives:

1. To establish a marketing theme.

2. To make local and regional residents aware of the park.

3. To attract visitors during low use periods, (mid week during June, July and August and during the fall and winter).

4. To encourage the interaction of the park with existing private tourist operators and the local commercial sector (i.e., nearby private campgrounds, white water rafting operations).

5. To encourage the preparation of research articles on the park.

6. To encourage the use of the park by two Renfrew County school boards.

Westmeath will be promoted as a day-use park throughout Renfrew County as part of the Renfrew Whitewater Country Tourism Strategy. The Ministry of Natural Resources will co-ordinate with the Ministry of Transportation and the County of Renfrew to comply with their guidelines in erecting signs along highways and secondary roads leading to the park.

The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to work with the Upper Ottawa Valley Tourist Association and the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation to promote the park.

14.0 DEVELOPMENT

Development within Westmeath Provincial Park will be kept to a minimum and restricted to the access and Development zones. The location and design of all facilities will reflect the character of the surrounding natural environment. Development will be carried out in accordance with approved site and development plans and managed in accordance with a Park Operating Plan. The following facilities are necessary for the successful operation of the park and will be carried out through Ministry of Natural Resources work planning programs and special projects funding.

14.1 Access & Circulation

Access into the park will follow existing park roads as much as possible. These roads will be up-graded to handle two-way traffic. A small parking area will be developed at the entrance to the park near County Road No. 12 as part of the group camping area and for winter use by cross-country skiers. During the operation season the access road will be closed at night. The road will not be plowed during

the winter.

The park access road will follow an old bush road along the north shore of Bellows Bay. This alignment was chosen in order that the remainder of the sand spit could be left intact and undisturbed. The access road will split at the entrance to the Development Zone to become a one-way traffic loop through the Development Zone. Development will proceed according to guidelines outlined in the Development Standards Manual provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Two parking areas for 50 vehicles each will be developed within the backshore area of the Development Zone. These parking areas will be situated no closer than 75 metres to the beach (Figure 5). Visitor capacity calculations for the beach and backshore area indicate that the park could accommodate a third parking area also for 50 vehicles. However, this parking area will only be developed in the future should demand warrant and based upon an environmental assessment of user impact on the park to be undertaken by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

A pathway and boardwalk (accessible to the physically challenged) will be developed from each parking area to the beach, providing the only access to the beach. The boardwalk will also interconnect all facilities (changehouses and washrooms) between the beach and parking areas thus channelling the pedestrian traffic and preventing trampling of the sensitive dune system.

The access road to Bellows Bay will also be upgraded and a parking area for vehicles will be provided in a cleared area near the shore. The original access road near the shore of the Ottawa River will be used as the primary hiking and cross-country ski trail.

14.2 Visitor Services Facilities

The existing park buildings (cottage and garage) will be renovated and used as the visitor centre and park office (Figure 5). This centre will accommodate the park's interpretive program. The garage may be developed as a workshop and demonstration area.

14.3 Recreation Facilities

Swimming and beach activities are foreseen to be the most popular activities in Westmeath park. The Development zone includes 350 metres of sand beach which is at least 10 metres wide. The water is shallow retaining a depth of 3 to 4 feet for several hundred feet making Westmeath an ideal beach for use by families with small children. The beach area will be kept natural in appearance with minimal removal (and if so, in an

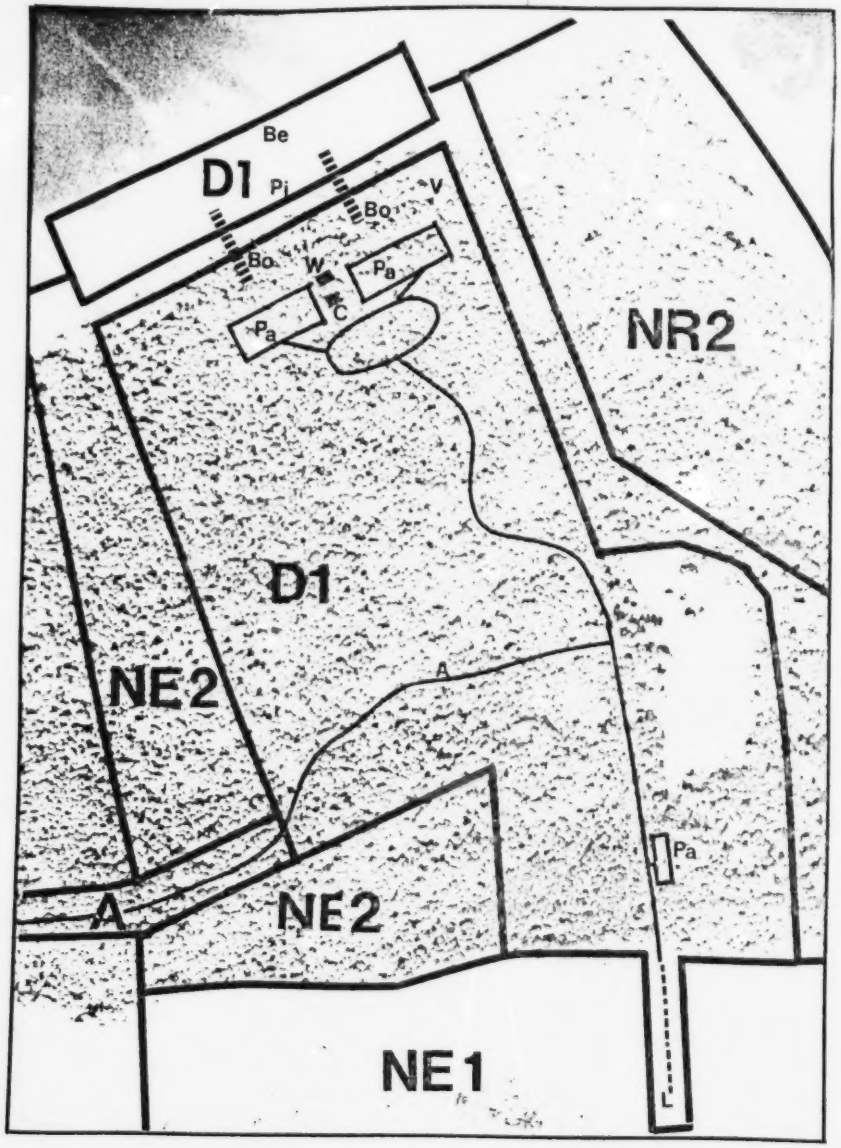
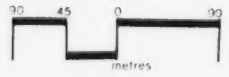


FIGURE 5 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPMENT ZONE-1, WESTMEATH PROVINCIAL PARK

LEGEND:

Be	Beach
Bo	Boardwalk
L	Boat Launch System
Pa	Parking
V	Visitor Centre/Park Office
A	Access Road
Pi	Picnic Area
C	Changehouse
W	Washroom
D1	Development Zone-1
NE2	Natural Environment Zone-2
A	Access Zone
NR2	Nature Reserve Zone-2
NE1	Natural Environment Zone-1



environmentally safe manner) of aquatic vegetation. Clam shells and snails may become a problem for swimmers and will be removed from the active beach area if necessary. It is anticipated that the frequent use of the beach area will discourage the establishment of more vegetation and the presence of clams.

Changehouses and washroom facilities will be constructed on each of the two pathways leading from the parking areas to the beach.

Development of the games field in the cleared area of the Development Zone will be limited to a play field. This area will include two vault privies and an eight vehicle parking area to be used by those using the boat launch facility on Bellows Bay. A boat launch system for small watercraft will be developed on Bellows Bay. This structure will consist of sections of boardwalk which can be attached or detached to adjust its length to prevailing water levels in the bay. Thus, the structure can function as a wildlife observation platform and boat access facility.

14.4 Heritage Appreciation

Several nature trails will be developed throughout the park. A trail along the north shore of Bellows Bay will include observation platforms overlooking the bay. Wildlife observation structures may also be considered for the south side of Bellows bay to view the more abundant waterfowl populations which usually reside there. Interpretive trails including signs and boardwalks where necessary will be established in the vicinity of Sand Point and the cuspate foreland in order that visitors can appreciate the natural features of these areas without disturbing them. No other access will be provided to these Nature Reserve areas.

14.5 Administration and Operation Facilities

A small gate house will be constructed at the entrance to the park near County Road No.12. Park literature will be distributed from this location. This material will be obtained on a self-serve basis during the spring, fall and winter.

A maintenance compound area will be developed within Development Zone-2. This compound will be fenced and situated out of view of park visitors.

14.6 Services

Electrical services must be brought into the Development Zone from County Road No. 12. These services should be installed at the same time the road is upgraded and preferably located underground. The gate house, visitor services centre and maintenance compound all require electrical service.

Water will be obtained from a well in the Development Zone. An additional water source will be required at the park gate. Testing of the existing well is required to assess its suitability. Water will be supplied to both the visitor services centre and the maintenance compound.

15.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This management plan will be reviewed at least once every ten years. More frequent review may be undertaken should it be deemed necessary. Data collection and environmental monitoring will be conducted regularly by Ministry staff and through research projects carried out in the park. Amendments to the plan may be made at any time should the need be identified.

Development of facilities previously described in this plan will be carried out in accordance with the following list of priorities. The completion of projects will be based upon the availability and allocation of capital funding each year. Protection of the park's natural features shall receive the highest priority at all times.

Priority Rating	Project Description
1	Undertake a conservation easement with landowners abutting the south shore of Bellows Bay.
2	Negotiate a conservation easement with landowners abutting the south shore
3	Undertake a detailed cultural resources study of the Development Zone and Sand Point
4	Prepare a landform management plan, vegetation management plan and a waterfowl management plan
5	Upgrade the existing access road which is adjacent to Bellows Bay to the Development zone. Rehabilitate the alternate access road closest to the cuspate foreland while preventing access through it. Develop a gatehouse
6	Install hydro services to the Development Zone. Underground servicing will occur in conjunction with road development
7	Develop the existing access road to Bellows Bay and provide a small parking area
8	Develop one 50 vehicle parking area and a pathway (boardwalk) to the beach. Toilet facilities and one changehouse will be constructed
9	Upgrade the existing park buildings and provide a park office and visitor services centre

10 Develop a park operating plan and emergency measures plan

11 Initiate development of hiking and interpretive nature trails as well as the interpretive program for park visitors

12 Open park for public use

13 Initiate development of the backshore picnic area

14 Develop a second fifty vehicle parking area with toilet facilities, a changehouse and boardwalk access to the beach

15 Complete development of the backshore picnic area

16 Complete development of the hiking and nature trails

17 Develop the group camping area near the park entrance

18 Develop boat launch facilities on Bellows Bay for small watercraft

19 Develop waterfowl observation platforms on Bellows Bay

16.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The planning process for Westmeath Provincial Park was initiated in December, 1987. An invitation to participate in the planning process was placed in eight local newspapers and sent to the mailing list.
In March, 1988 a Newsletter was produced and circulated to the mailing list outlining the background information collected on the park and proposing four alternative concept plans for public review and discussion. A two day public open house was held on April 15 and 16, 1988. In addition several meetings were held with interested groups and individuals. Fifty-four people reviewed the displayed material and thirty three written submissions were received. Twenty six people identified a preferred concept plan, eighteen of these people supported a Natural Environment Park. However, strong support was received for a Nature Reserve classification of the park area allowing minimal activities and visitor use.

Several area residents, the Township of Westmeath, the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association and the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation all expressed a need for additional public recreational opportunities on the Ottawa River. It was also suggested that the local school boards could make frequent use of Westmeath park to enhance their outdoor education programs.

Local tourist operators were concerned that any overnight

camping in Westmeath Park could affect their businesses. In fact, very little support was received for overnight camping in the park.

Numerous comments were received regarding the importance of protecting the natural features within the park. Concern was also expressed that park staffing should be adequate to protect these sensitive areas. Support was received both for and against the continuation of waterfowl hunting within Bellows Bay. A complete record of public comments is available at the Pembroke District Office.

In response to the various comments and concerns raised during the review of the four concept plans, Ministry staff developed a fifth option which can be described as a Restrictive-Natural Environment Park. This option addresses the need for public waterfront recreational opportunities while increasing the focus on environmental concerns and the importance of protecting sensitive features on the property.

The Preliminary Park Management Plan is based on this fifth concept. The layout of the access road and Development Zone in this Preliminary Management Plan has been altered from the previous proposals in an effort to minimize the affect that use of the Development zone would have on the remainder of the park. The beach area in the Development Zone has been reduced in light of comments received suggesting minimal disturbance of the wet beach area. Nature Reserve Zones have increased in area and buffer zones have been enlarged. Waterfowl hunting has been permitted in a designated area and it is believed that this traditional use can continue under strict management guidelines to be contained in a Waterfowl Management Plan. Car camping has been excluded from this plan to reduce the level of visitor use in the park. The Preliminary Management Plan permits occasional group camping within a designated area of the park with prior approval of the Ministry of Natural Resources. The impact of predominantly day use activities in the park has been addressed in Landform, Vegetation and Recreation Management Plans.

The Westmeath Provincial Park Preliminary Management Plan attempts to address the concerns raised during public consultation. Most importantly, it strives to balance the need to protect the significant natural features found on the site with the need to develop low intensity oudoor recreation opportunities in this near urban location.

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